

**STATEMENT OF
TIM YOUNG
WYOMING PATHWAYS
P.O. BOX 725
Lander, WY 82520**

**MEETING BEFORE THE
JOINT TRANSPORTATION, HIGHWAYS AND MILITARY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Meeting date May 3, 2022

Introduction – Right-of-Way Rules and Policies for Uses of Rights of Way

Chairman Burkhart, Chairman Landen, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today as you begin work on the Interim Topic Priority #1, Transportation and Highways in Wyoming. I wish to provide an update on the needs and benefits of bicycling, walking and trail facilities, which are frequently transportation infrastructure elements located within public rights of way.

Bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation, also known collectively as “active transportation”, are defined in Wyoming Statutes, and primarily addressed in Title 24 Highways and Title 31 Motor Vehicles. People walking and people propelling a bicycle or an e-bike are recognized as legitimate modes of transportation and common in every community in Wyoming. Pedestrian mode of travel was, of course, the first means of human transportation. The invention of the modern safety bicycle predates the automobile, and in fact it was bicyclists that led the Good Road Movement in the 1880’s to advocate for improved highways for transportation. Today, pedestrian and bicycle travel are basic and important components of Wyoming’s multi-modal Transportation System.

ARTICLE 6 - PEDESTRIANS' RIGHTS AND DUTIES

31-5-102. Definitions. (xxviii) “Pedestrian” means any person afoot.

31-5-601. Obedience to traffic-control devices; general privileges and restrictions.

- (a) A pedestrian shall obey the instructions of any official traffic-control device specifically applicable to him unless otherwise directed by a police officer.
- (b) Pedestrians are subject to traffic-control signals at intersections as provided by W.S. 31-5-403 and 31-5-404.
- (c) At all other places pedestrians shall be accorded the privileges and are subject to the restrictions stated in this act.

ARTICLE 7 - BICYCLES AND ELECTRIC BICYCLES

31-5-702. General rights and duties of riders.

Every person propelling a vehicle by human power or riding a bicycle or electric bicycle has all of the rights and all of the duties applicable to the driver of any vehicle under this act, except as to special regulations in this act and except as to those provisions which by their nature can have no application.

Benefits of Active Transportation

Along with serving essential mobility needs, there are three significant benefits to the activities of bicycling and walking: the economic benefits, the improvements to people's physical and mental health, and the enhanced quality of community life – connecting people and places. Not only is access to active transportation critical to Wyoming's travel and tourism industry, it is a fundamental component to recruiting new businesses, creating jobs, and at the heart of healthy people living in prosperous Wyoming communities.

To gauge demand for these transportation facilities, Wyoming Pathways recently developed a survey of Wyoming communities to gather information on active transportation projects proposed or identified by a city, town, county, or local interested party. While the survey is still continuing, the results so far show over 50 communities responding with over 170 identified biking and walking projects. The responses are from all around Wyoming, in communities large and small. The results will be shared with the Committee as available.

Based on the high demand and benefits, active transportation facilities should be considered part of the basic infrastructure necessary for Wyoming's communities to thrive and prosper. Biking and walking are important components of the transportation system, and quality trail systems are necessary to address recreation demands. In tandem, programs that encourage more walking, biking and active lifestyles are viewed as beneficial to improve public health outcomes and save on health care in Wyoming.

Recommendation - Active Transportation is Transportation, with valid ROW needs

Research shows that increasingly, decisions to locate and invest in new businesses and create jobs are driven by the attractiveness of communities as places to live and do business. Pathways, safe streets and access to quality recreational trails are components of these decisions, and they make an important contribution to the economic vitality and quality of life of our communities.

These facilities are by the very nature of transportation frequently located within public rights of way, which could be along State Highways, county roads, city or town streets, and also within dedicated public access easements or land owned in fee for this purpose. This is working well, and it is extremely important to continue to support the use of public ROW for this purpose.

People considering moving here, and our Wyoming youth choosing to stay here, will be influenced by the existence and quality of these active transportation and recreation facilities. Communities with safe streets, walkable downtowns, local pathways and public trails tend to experience a combination of a public health benefit of an increasingly active population, a more vibrant and resilient economy, and environmental benefits such as reduced traffic congestion and improved air quality.

A compelling number of recent studies confirm the high level of these benefits. Four main themes on how pathways and trails benefit communities emerge from this detailed research across the United States.

- Pathways and Trails can generate business impacts and create new jobs by attracting visitors, especially overnight visitors.
- Active Transportation facilities are often associated with higher property value, especially when designed to provide neighborhood and destination access.
- Local active transportation and trails are a valuable part of residents' quality of life.
- Communities with active transportation options are associated with increased physical activity and improved public health, especially in rural places without other safe places to exercise.

One additional benefit is the fact that Wyoming contractors and construction firms tend to win most pathways and trail contracts for projects built in Wyoming. While major highway contracts frequently go to large out of state firms, local pathways are overwhelmingly designed and built by local Wyoming firms that employ skilled Wyoming workers. This means Active Transportation funding in Wyoming is largely reinvested in our communities.

In summary, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are necessary components of Wyoming's transportation system, and where planning determines it is necessary to locate these in public rights of way, that must be accommodated by government agencies responsible for transportation planning. The case can be made that there are pressing unmet active transportation needs to be addressed in Wyoming, and that state investments in community projects would yield significant economic, quality of life, and health benefits.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide recommendations to the Committee. I would be pleased to answer any questions or offer any additional help to assist in the discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Young", written in a cursive style.

Tim Young
Special Projects Director, Wyoming Pathways